

Activity #3: Say Something

Section 3: Implementing Focused Mathematics Lessons

Section 1: How do teachers purposefully plan each lesson?

In the previous section, we presented strategies for seizing teachable moments and integrating math content into regular daily routines. This section presents another aspect of mathematics instruction in early childhood: focused mathematics lessons.

Focused mathematics lessons are planned instructional activities targeting specific mathematics concepts.

These are thoughtfully designed to provide systematic support of children's mathematics development. In early childhood, focused mathematics lessons should also be engaging, playful, and meaningful. Teachers must strike a balance between implementing coherent, targeted mathematics lessons and crafting connected, meaningful, and playful experiences for young children. This section presents strategies for implementing engaging and effective focused mathematics lessons in early childhood classrooms.

"... high-quality, challenging, and accessible mathematics education for 3– to 6–year-old children is a vital foundation for future mathematics learning. In every early childhood setting, children should experience effective, research-based curriculum and teaching practices."

Section 1: Say Something Prompts:

- 1. Ask your partner a question about the information you read.**
- 2. Share an interesting new idea you learned from the information you read.**
- 3. Tell your partner how the information you read connects with something you already knew.**
- 4. Share a key point from the information you read.**

Section 2: What guidelines can teachers use to help them determine what type of math content to teach in a given lesson?

In addition to seizing teachable moments for mathematics and integrating mathematics into regular daily activities, CIRCLE recommends that early childhood teachers do two 10–15-minute, focused mathematics lessons with small groups of children each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Section 2: Say Something Prompts:

1. Briefly summarize, in your own words, what you read.
2. Ask your partner a question about the information you read.
3. Share an interesting new idea you learned from the information you read.
4. Tell your partner how the information you read connects with something you already knew.

Section 3: What are the steps in effectively implementing focused mathematics lessons?

Step 1: Know your children.

Keep current progress-monitoring notes.

- CIRCLE recommends that you assess children regularly to see how they are progressing in mathematics.
- It is very helpful to keep notes about each child's emerging math skills.

Establish goals for each day.

- It is important to understand the learning objectives for early childhood mathematics.
- You may want to follow the list of activities and goals established by a research-based curriculum for early childhood. If you do not have access to a research-based curriculum, please review the guidelines and goals for early childhood mathematics provided in *Read About Mathematics in Early Childhood* (Section 2).

Step 2: Plan your lessons.

Select and modify.

- Select lessons that target the learning objectives you have established for your children. These lessons should build on each other so that children are constantly challenged but not overwhelmed.
- Consider your classroom themes as well as your children's individual learning styles, temperaments, and cultural backgrounds. Modify the activities to fit into your current schedule.

Prepare.

- Gather materials.
- Decide when and how you will implement your mathematics lessons and write these into your schedule. (Note: CIRCLE recommends that you do the focused lesson with one small group in the morning and one in the afternoon. Repeat for several days until you have reached every child.)

Step 3: Implement and reflect.

Try a mathematics lesson.

- Try your first focus lesson with a small group of children.
- Note whether the lesson engages and motivates your children. Also note which children need extra help and which need more of a challenge.

Decide what to do next.

- Sometimes you may need to modify or repeat a lesson several times with the same group of children.
- Keep a file of activities that work well so you can use them again.

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